

A Survivor On A Mission To Help Children With Cancer

BY DIANE FEEN | PHOTOS COURTESY OF MARC JULIEN

When Marc Julien was diagnosed in with stage-four cancer in his lymphoid and tonsil in 2018, his world was turned on its axis.

Suddenly the Delray Beach real estate developer and custom home builder found himself in a fight that would test his faith, stamina and spirit.

Forty days of treatment, months of recovery helped pull him through what he calls “the hardest reset of my life.”

The local doctors who treated him and made his recovery possible are Dr. Gomolin (his oncologist) Dr. Wiess (his head and neck specialist) and Dr. Williams (his Radiologist).

Though cancer treatment is often grueling Julien saw the rainbow through the rain.

“Cancer is the best thing that ever happened to me. It made me a better person and a better father. You learn fast that you can’t change the past, and the future hasn’t happened yet. All you have is the present and you have to make the most of it.”



search only receives 4% of federal cancer funding, while adult cancers get 96%. Even more devastating, children are treated with harsh adult chemotherapy protocols, leaving 95% of survivors with potential long-term health issues.

“They knew not enough was being done,” said Dawn Zachman, NPCF’s Chief Growth & Impact Officer. “If more people were working on children’s cancers, we would find cures faster.”

So, the moms built a foundation that consists of 38 hospitals nationwide that united to develop better, less toxic, and more effective treatments for pediatric cancers.

That network became the Sunshine Research Project, a collaborative research avenue that accelerates clinical trials for childhood cancers, including rare forms that often receive little or no funding.

Every year NPCF has over 100 doctors, scientists, and researchers come to a two-day summit in Tampa Florida. At this important Summit they analyze current trials, discuss failures and breakthroughs, and pitch ideas for the next major advance in pediatric oncology.

“It’s a place where top pediatric researchers can sit at one table and say, ‘This worked. This didn’t. How can we make it better.’ This type of collaboration can save lives,” said Zachman.

One of the most important features of The Sunshine Research Project is that it allows children to get into cutting-edge trials without uprooting their lives and families. A child in Gainesville, the Bronx, or Los Angeles can enroll in the same pediatric cancer trial without having to travel across the country.

“Hospitals don’t give money to other hospitals. But when donors give to the National Pediatric Cancer Foundation, the money follows the child. It goes where the patients need it,” said Zachman.

This model makes rare cancer trials possible. Many pediatric cancers can only be studied when they have 30 patients in the trial. NPCF and The Sunshine Research Project solve that problem by enrolling children across the country at local partner hospitals.

“Without this system,” Zachman said, “some trials would take years, or never happen at all.”

The foundation also assists families battling pediatric cancer with their healthcare Navigator Program. This state-of-the art program is headed up by Kelly Goddard. Goddard, who is a nurse, has a daughter who was diagnosed with cancer at 10 months old. Doc-

Julien has done just that.

When he recovered Julien began training for the “Race Across America,” the world’s toughest endurance cycling event. It’s a 3,000-mile bike race from Oceanside, California to Annapolis, Maryland. He trained for two and a half years and rode over 10,000 miles a year.

As he prepared for the race, Julien did research to find a foundation with a record of financial transparency and impact.

He found the perfect charity - The National Pediatric Cancer Foundation. This 34-year-old organization was founded by two mothers desperate to find cures for their own children who had cancer.

NPCF had a 100% rating on Charity Navigator, and they spend 89 cents of every dollar to support research programs.

“That’s extremely high. When you see a foundation with that level of responsibility, integrity, and efficiency you know they’re doing something right,” said Julien.

It turns out that children’s cancer re-



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